In addition to the [brain](http://health.howstuffworks.com/brain.htm), the side effects of marijuana reach many other parts of the body. Marijuana is filled with hundreds of chemicals, and when it is burned, hundreds of additional compounds are produced. When marijuana is inhaled or ingested in some other form, several short-term effects occur. Some of marijuana's side effects are:

* Problems with memory and learning
* Distorted perception
* Difficulty with thinking and problem solving
* Loss of coordination
* Increased [heart](http://health.howstuffworks.com/heart.htm) rate
* Anxiety, paranoia and panic attacks

The initial effects created by the THC in marijuana wear off after an hour or two, but the chemicals stay in your body for much longer. The terminal half-life of THC is from about 20 hours to 10 days, depending on the amount and potency of the marijuana used. This means that if you take one milligram of THC that has a half-life of 20 hours, you will still have 0.031 mg of THC in your body more than four days later. The longer the half-life, the longer the THC lingers in your body.

­ The debate over the addictive capacity of marijuana continues. Ongoing studies now show a number of possible symptoms associated with the cessation of marijuana use. These symptoms most commonly include irritability, nervousness, depression, anxiety and even anger. Other symptoms are restlessness, severe changes in appetite, violent outbursts, interrupted [sleep](http://health.howstuffworks.com/sleep.htm) or insomnia. In addition to these possible physical effects, psychological dependence usually develops because a person's mind craves the high that it gets when using the drug.

Beyond these effects that marijuana has, marijuana smokers are susceptible to the same health problems as [tobacco smokers](http://healthguide.howstuffworks.com/smoking-in-depth.htm), such as [bronchitis](http://health.howstuffworks.com/bronchitis-ga.htm), [emphysema](http://health.howstuffworks.com/emphysema-ga.htm) and bronchial asthma. Other effects include dry mouth, red eyes, impaired motor skills and impaired concentration. Long-term use of the drug can increase the risk of damaging the lungs and [reproductive system](http://health.howstuffworks.com/wellness/drugs-alcohol/human-reproduction.htm), according to the U.S. Drug Enforcement Agency (DEA). It has also been linked to [heart attacks](http://health.howstuffworks.com/wellness/drugs-alcohol/heart-attack.htm).

­­Although marijuana is known to have negative effects on the human body, there is a raging debate over the use of medicinal marijuana. Some say that marijuana should be legalized for medical use because it has been known to suppress nausea, relieve eye pressure, decrease [muscle](http://health.howstuffworks.com/wellness/drugs-alcohol/muscle.htm) spasms, stimulate appetite, stop convulsions and eliminate [menstrual](http://health.howstuffworks.com/wellness/drugs-alcohol/menstruation.htm) pain. Because of its therapeutic nature, marijuana has been used in the treatment of several conditions including: [cancer](http://health.howstuffworks.com/cancer.htm) and [AIDS](http://health.howstuffworks.com/aids.htm) (to supress nausea and stimulate appetite), [glaucoma](http://healthguide.howstuffworks.com/glaucoma-in-depth.htm) (to alleviate eye pressure), [epilepsy](http://healthguide.howstuffworks.com/epilepsy-in-depth.htm) (to stop convulsions) and [multiple sclerosis](http://healthguide.howstuffworks.com/multiple-sclerosis-in-depth.htm) (to decrease muscle spasms).